

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING
BRIEF
AT
HAGLEY OBELISK,
HAGLEY HALL, HAGLEY,
WORCESTERSHIRE

Jo Wainwright

Illustrated by Carolyn Hunt

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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Project 3460
Report 1745
WSM 42104

Archaeological watching brief at Hagley Obelisk, Hagley Hall, Hagley, Worcestershire

Jo Wainwright

Background information

<i>Client</i>	Hagley Hall Estate c/o Mark Van Oss and Associates
<i>Site address</i>	Hagley Obelisk, Hagley Hall, Hagley, Worcestershire
<i>National Grid reference</i>	SO 921 816
<i>Historic Environment Record reference</i>	WSM 42104
<i>Brief</i>	HEAS 2010
<i>Project parameters</i>	IfA 2008

Previous archaeological work on the site

There has been no previous recorded archaeological work undertaken on site.

Historical background and reasons for the archaeological works

The Hagley Obelisk (WSM 03123; Listed Building ref. 156398, Grade II*) is also known as the Wychbury Obelisk and was built in the mid 18th century (Fig 1; Plate 1). It is one of several structures erected in Hagley Park by George, first Lord Lyttelton, as part of his scheme to landscape the grounds in the new Picturesque style. The obelisk consists of a square pedestal with moulded base and cornice supporting a tall tapered shaft with a moulded plinth. It is constructed of sandstone ashlar on an ashlar-faced brick base. The obelisk is on English Heritage Buildings at Risk Register because of the poor condition of the monument.

The obelisk is situated on a prominent grassy knoll with panoramic views, at 213m AOD. The underlying geology consists of the Warwickshire group which is made up of mudstones, sandstones, coal, ironstone and ferricrete. The soils are of the Crediton series (541e; Ragg et al 1984). To the north-west of the obelisk is Wychbury Hill Camp, an Iron Age hillfort.

Works to repair the monument are currently being planned and a watching brief was required to observe the excavations of test pits to locate the foundations and to see what the underlying deposits consisted of.

Aims

The aim of the watching brief was to observe and record archaeological deposits, and to determine their extent, state of preservation, date and type, as far as reasonably possible.

Methods

General specification for fieldwork	CAS 1995, HEAS 2008
Sources consulted	HER
Date of fieldwork	26 January 2010
Maximum dimensions of test pits observed	length 1.50m width 0.55m depth 0.75m

Visibility of the deposits

Observation of the excavated areas was undertaken both during and after the hand excavation of the five test pits (Fig 2 and 3; Plate 2). The exposed surfaces were sufficiently clean to observe archaeological deposits.

Statement of confidence

The good visibility of the deposits within the test pits allowed a high degree of confidence that the aims of the project have been achieved.

Deposit description for Test Pits 1-5

Context	Description	Date	Interpretation	Depth of deposit below ground surface
100	Dark brown sandy clay with occasional sandstone and brick fragments	Modern	Topsoil and turf	0.00-0.10m
101	Red clay silt with frequent sandstone, brick rubble and occasional vessel glass. Varied in thickness	Mid 18 th century to 20 th century	Building rubble from construction of obelisk in the mid 18 th century and probable repairs at a later date	0.10-0.60m
102	Red clays with grey staining and small to large sandstone fragments	Natural	Natural	0.35m+

Discussion

Five small test pits were excavated (Fig 2). Three of the test pits (1, 4 and 5) were situated against the monument's base to uncover the foundations, whilst the other two (2 and 3) were located away from the monument to establish the stratigraphy of the surrounding deposits.

The stratigraphy in Test Pits 1, 4 and 5 consisted of topsoil (100) overlying the mortared sandstone and brick rubble foundations of the monument. The footings were not undermined in the excavations but it appeared that they were only about 0.30m thick. Butting up to the foundations and continuing down by the side of the foundations was a mixture of brick and sandstone rubble in a red clay silt matrix (101). This was interpreted as construction debris from the building of the monument, mixed with debris from later repair work. Below (101) was clay and sandstone without inclusions (102) which was interpreted as the natural. The depth of the rubble layer varied in each test pit but had a maximum depth of 0.40m.

In the two test pits excavated away from the monument (2 and 3) the stratigraphy was the same as for the other trenches, although the natural (102) was not reached in Test Pit 2. Mixed rubble layer (101) was deepest in Test Pit 2, to a maximum depth of 0.50m.

The brick was identified as dating from the mid 18th century and the vessel glass from the 19th and 20th centuries (Angus Crawford pers comm). The finds were discarded after identification.

Conclusions

Deposits excavated date from the mid 18th century and are related to the construction of the obelisk and to later repairs to the monument. These deposits overlay the natural matrix natural. No earlier features, layers or structures were identified during the project.

Publication summary

The Service has a professional obligation to publish the results of archaeological projects within a reasonable period of time. To this end, the Service intends to use this summary as the basis for publication through local or regional journals. The client is requested to consider the content of this section as being acceptable for such publication.

A watching brief was undertaken on behalf of Hagley Hall Estates at Hagley Obelisk, Hagley Hall, Hagley, Worcestershire (NGR SO 921 816; HER ref WSM 42104). The excavations comprised of five test pits. Three of the pits were located against the obelisk whilst the other two were sited to test the ground away from the monument. The foundations of the obelisk were reached and were found to be constructed of mortared brick and sandstone rubble. A deposit underneath the topsoil and overlying the natural contained quantities of brick and sandstone rubble. This was interpreted as debris from the construction of the obelisk in the mid 18th century and from later repairs to the monument. No earlier features, layers or structures were identified during the project.

Acknowledgements

The Service would like to thank the following for their kind assistance in the successful conclusion of this project, Mark Van Oss (Mark Van Oss and Associates), Martyn Phillips (Midland Conservation Ltd), Mike Glyde (Historic Environment Planning Officer, Worcestershire County Council) and Oliver Russell (HER Assistant, Worcestershire County Council).

Bibliography

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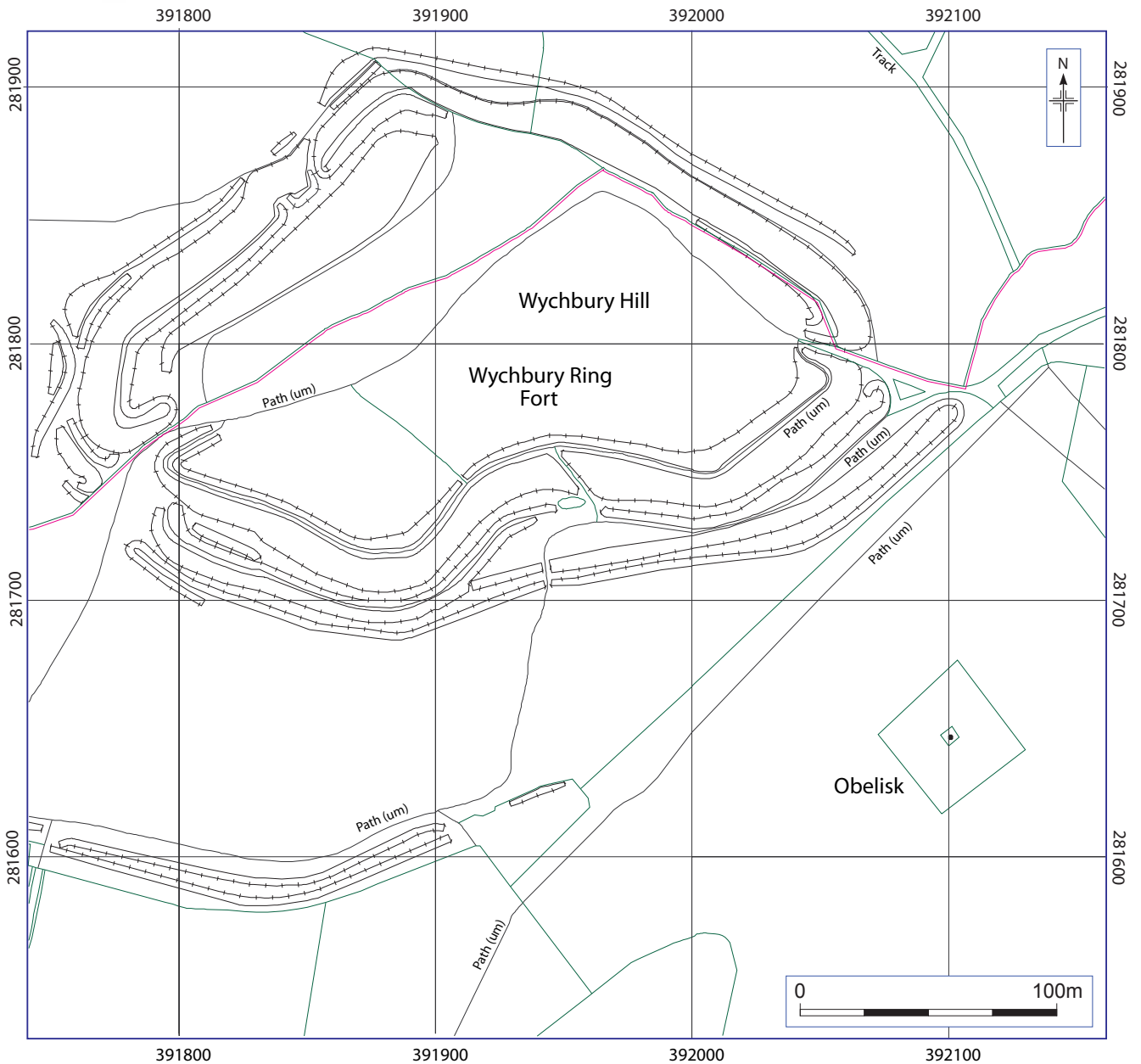
HEAS, 2008 *Standards and guidelines for archaeological projects in Worcestershire*, Historic Environment and Archaeology Service, Worcestershire County Council unpublished document dated November 2008

HEAS, 2010 *Requirements for a generic archaeological watching brief in the county of Worcestershire*, Historic Environment and Archaeology Service, Worcestershire County Council unpublished document 27 January 2010

IfA, 2008 *Standard and guidance for an archaeological watching brief*, Institute for Archaeologists

Ragg, J M, Beard, G R, George, H, Heaven, F W, Hollis, J M, Jones, R J A, Palmer, R C, Reeve, M J, Robson, J D, and Whitfield, W A D, 1984 *Soils and their use in midland and western England*, Soil Survey of England and Wales, **12**

Figures

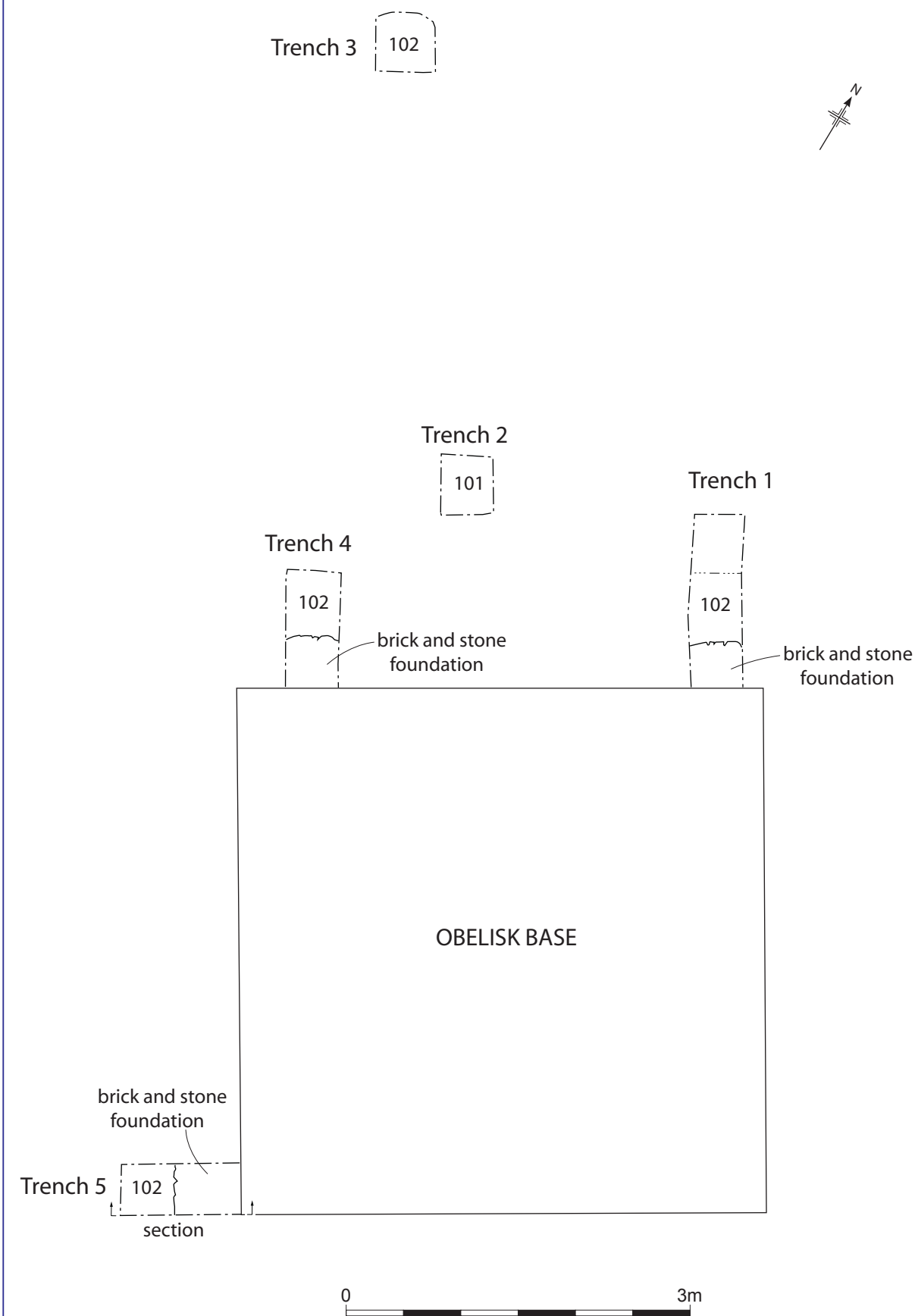


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Location of the Hagley Obelisk

Figure 1

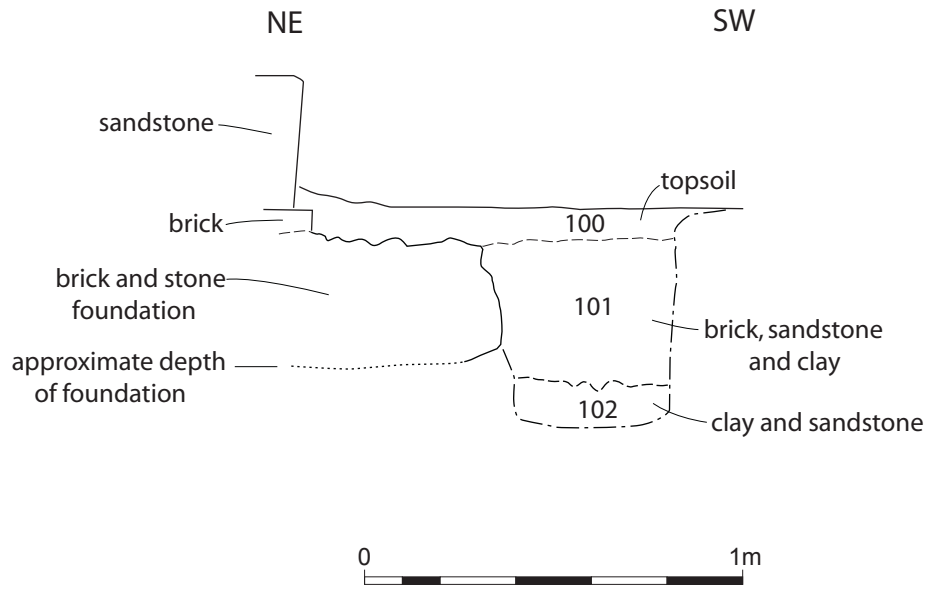
PLAN OF TRENCHES



Plan of trenches

Figure 2

TRENCH 5: NORTH WEST FACING SECTION



Trench 5: section

Figure 3

Plates



Plate 1 Test pits under excavation, view from the north-east



Plate 2 Test Pit 2 from above, showing (100 and 101). Scale 0.40m

Appendix 1 Technical information

The archive

The archive consists of:

- 1 Trench record sheet AS41
- 1 Fieldwork progress records AS2
- 1 Photographic records AS3
- 23 Digital photographs
- 1 Drawing number catalogue AS4
- 2 Scale drawings
- 1 Computer disk

The project archive is intended to be placed at:

Worcestershire County Museum
Hartlebury Castle
Hartlebury
Near Kidderminster
Worcestershire DY11 7XZ
Tel Hartlebury (01299) 250416